



ELEGANT Erasmus + Project
Project No. 610265-EPP-1-2019-1-HR-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP

Enhancing Teaching, Learning and Graduate Employability
Through University – Enterprise Cooperation
ELEGANT

Supplementary
External Evaluation Report

November 2023

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1. Introduction

Project Title: Enhancing Teaching, Learning and Graduate Employability Through University–Enterprise Cooperation

Project Acronym: ELEGANT

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The Elegant project is an Erasmus+ project, originally funded from 15.11.2019 to 14.11.2022, now extended by one year to 14.11.2023. The total budget is €968,814.00.

The partners of the project are:

P1 Dubrovnik University, Croatia

P2 Princess Sumaya University for Technology, Jordan

P3 Jordan University for Science and Technology, Jordan

P4 Al Balqa Applied University, Jordan

P5 The Information and Communications Technology Association of Jordan, Jordan

P6 Modern University for Business and Science, Lebanon

P7 Beirut Arab University, Lebanon

P8 The Syndicate of Computer Sciences of Lebanon, Lebanon

P9 Staffordshire University, UK

P10 Università Politecnica delle Marche, Italy

P11 Psicoglobal Co., Portugal

2. The External Evaluation of the project

This supplementary report covers the final project year, from November 2022 until the end date of 14 November 2023. It will not repeat material covered in the initial report written in December 2022, but will look at project activities carried out in the final year and the efficiency and effectiveness of those activities. This report will also review the response of the project partners to the initial report's conclusions and recommendations.

3. Project activities

The consortium has carried out many activities in the final project year.

WP4: In December 2022 PSUT hosted the Project Monitoring Meeting, which all partners from JO and LB attended. The External Evaluator also attended this meeting. In addition to reviewing the activities of the project and discussions about the final project year and planned activities, monitoring visits were also undertaken to ABAU and JUST.

At these visits, and also at PSUT, the External Evaluator was able to view the equipment which had been purchased for each partner under WP3 of the project, and confirm the presence of Erasmus+ stickers on the equipment. The use of the equipment was demonstrated to the group by staff and

students. It was clear to the External Evaluator that both staff and students made good use of the equipment in their classes and laboratories. They were very appreciative of the equipment that had been purchased for their universities by the Project. Many students showed the visiting group electronic and robotic items which they had made in their classes, including a very impressive demonstration of a small robot.

As there is Government advice against travel to Lebanon for UK citizens, the External Evaluator took the opportunity to hold meetings with partners from Lebanon to discuss the activities that had been undertaken in their universities and the effectiveness and impact upon university staff. The benefit of the purchased equipment was also discussed. The Lebanese partner universities had run many online and face to face workshops and seminars for the benefit of their staff, as well as enabling staff to travel to EU partner universities. They were appreciative of the investment in their universities and staff by the project and felt that all those who had been involved in project activities had benefitted greatly from the up-to-date material and contact with academic staff from other universities both in LB, JO and the EU. Plans were made to hold future similar events in the final year of the project.

At the Monitoring Meeting feedback was given on the benefits of the Workshops held both in partner countries and the EU. Staff confirmed the benefits of sharing ideas and seeing a different teaching environment and a different set of rules and regulations, and stated that the ideas would be adapted to their conditions and developed in their home institutions. Staff would now be able to bring the teaching in JO/LB to a higher level, not just teaching with slides and lectures, but giving students a better experience of learning.

Under WP2, BAU and MUBS jointly organised a Mentor Training Workshop for Experts from Industry, using the experience gained from EU partners (November 2022). Around 100 participants attended the event at BAU, with some participants attending in person, others on line.

A number of workshops under WPs 2 and 3 were held during the year, both in JO, LB and at EU partner universities to update syllabi and curricula in a number of subject areas:

At PSUT a workshop on Education Transformation: Computer Science, Games Design and Programming was held, organised by SU, UK. There were 21 participants from JO and LB partner universities.

Both PSUT and ABAU also hosted a workshop on Digital Business Tools, organised by UNIDU, HR. Staff and students from the University's Business School attended, as well as a number of university professors from BAU and MUBS.

Five Workshops were hosted in the EU giving JO and LB staff the opportunity to experience the academic environment of an EU university. At UNIVPM, three simultaneous intensive workshops on Advanced Topics in AI, Cybersecurity, and Big Data were held. 12 specially selected staff participated, 4 in each Workshop, further developing their skills essential for the development, modernisation, and effective delivery of these subjects. A workshop on Games Development and Artificial Intelligence was held at SU with 8 participants. A further workshop on the same subject was held in October 2023 to enable some participants from LB to attend as they had been prevented from going to the UK in June due to problems over the issuing of visas on time.

The flexibility, cooperation and willingness to adapt plans shown by project partners to overcome problems is to be commended. By holding a second similar workshop staff members from LB were not disadvantaged due to no fault of their own when their visas were delayed.

The two partner universities in LB (MUBS and BAU) have hosted several seminars and workshops in LB as part of WPs 2 and 3:

- Seminar on University-Enterprise Links: the Experience of European partners; 21 participants attended this event which included representatives from UNIDU, SU and Psicoglobal. The experience of Italian partners was presented on line. Holding this seminar in LB was one of the recommendations in the first External Evaluation Report.
- A Work-Ready Seminar: Stand out to Get Hired (with 95 participants) including staff and students from LB and EU partners from HR, UK and PT.
- Ethical Hacking Workshop at BAU, covering theory and practical exercises.
- A workshop on Advanced Security and Connectivity: Exploring Malware Detection, Intelligent systems, and smart IoT was held at MUBS, with workshop trainers from SU and PSUT with 30 participants from MUBS and BAU.

Under WP2 a Senior Projects Competition was organised in all 5 partners and the best projects were selected. Students made a presentation of their projects at the Final Project Conference in Amman (Mostafa Bizri made presentations on behalf of Lebanese students but Jordanian students themselves made their presentations).

As part of WP4 activities, a Project Monitoring Meeting was held in LB in March 2023.

Under the auspices of WP4 (Quality Control and Monitoring) questionnaires have been sent out to all participants after every event. The results are generally very positive (there were no cases of an unsatisfactory response). The average score of all workshops was over 4 and the average score for the Final Conference in JO was 4.9.

The National Exploitation Seminars (under WP5) were held in both LB and JO during this year. Presentations were made by EU staff in person and on line. The event in LB was held at the same time as a project monitoring meeting, so the Project Coordinator and colleagues from UK and PT were present. 73 participants attended the Seminar including representatives from the EU Mission in Beirut and other universities in LB, where they learned about the project and its achievements. In JO the National Exploitation Seminar was held on 18 September 2023, just before the Final Project Conference. 50 participants attended the event including the Director of the National Erasmus+ Office (NEO), Jordan and a representative from the EU Delegation in Jordan.

The main outputs of the project were presented:

- Over 1500 MOUs and Agreements were signed
- Over 1600 students on placement in companies, organised by the Liaison Officers
- Over 140 workshops/seminars for students/staff and company experts

- 165 Company staff giving lectures and being involved in mentoring or the assessment of students' work
- 379 students with industry related projects
- 22 staff and curriculum development workshops (in person and on-line)
- A total of 363 members of staff participating in person or on-line in these workshops

All of these outputs were significantly greater than the targets set in the Application, a major achievement of the Consortium.

The Final Project Conference (WP5) was held in JO in September 2023. Unfortunately due to a prior commitment, the External Evaluator was not able to attend. 36 people attended the Final Conference which was held over two days. The overall conclusion of participants to the project and its achievements was very positive, with all partners agreeing that the project had been of enormous benefit to all parties and that these benefits would continue for students for many years to come. Discussions were also held on future cooperation.

The Final Project Conference was also held in LB in October 2023. Although it was planned as a face to face meeting and some participants had even bought their tickets, it was decided that in the light of the war in the region, it was not safe to hold a physical meeting in Beirut. The Conference was therefore held on line on 20 October 2023. Presentations were made by partners with participation from the representative from the National Erasmus+ Office-Lebanon and the Delegation of the European Union – Lebanon.

In July 2023 MUBS organised the “MUBS Erasmus+ Dissemination & Info Day 2023 - MEDID 2023 at which the activities and benefits of the ELEGANT project were presented. The meeting, as part of WP5 activities, was attended by 150 participants representing the Erasmus+ Office, local and international universities, ministry staff, students, and stakeholders and the event constituted an invaluable platform to exchange knowledge, share best practices, and explore new avenues for Erasmus+ collaboration.

Erasmus+ Cluster Meeting (WP5), (September 2023). As the EU announced 2023 as the European Year of Skills, the National Erasmus+ Office in Lebanon organised an online cluster meeting entitled “Year of Skills in Europe and Beyond: Focus on Lebanon” on 28 September 2023. The aim of this meeting was to discuss the issue of skills development for enhancing employability in Lebanon from the perspectives of Erasmus+ projects, other EU projects and various stakeholders. The ELEGANT project was presented and discussed at the meeting.

The software to support the placements of students in companies was developed by the Liaison Officer of BAU, Mr Mostafa Bizri in cooperation with his colleagues at BAU but although some modules of the software are used by students, a final module is in the process of development.

Large numbers of students have benefitted from the equipment and will continue to do so for many years to come.

Under WP6, a successful meeting was held in August with the External Project Auditor. The External Evaluator was present at this meeting, alongside the Project Coordinator, Project Manager, and the Coordinator of the project in Jordan and Project Administrator.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

I will not repeat my conclusions from the first evaluation report, but will just add that partners have continued to hold workshops and seminars to benefit a large number of people, far in excess of the numbers envisaged in the application. Despite the difficulties that the project management team have faced, the partners have done well and there is no doubt that the benefits from the project will be felt by both staff, students and local companies for many years to come. The updated syllabi and course plans and more modern teaching methods, adapted following the pandemic, will continue to give students the best opportunities to take the knowledge and employability skills required to the workplace, thus benefitting local industry and ensuring the sustainability of the project beyond the end of the project period.

Looking at the recommendations made in the first evaluation report, the following observations can be made:

- A total of 1511 MoUs and Agreements have now been signed between partner universities and enterprises in JO and LB.
- A list of the companies who have signed MoUs or made Agreements with partner universities will be put onto the website to publicise this achievement.
- As mentioned above, the Seminar on University-Enterprise Links was held in LB in March 2023.
- It was agreed with partner universities that as they were moving to digital libraries there was no requirement for books to be purchased. Also it would not have been possible to use the excess funds as the equipment in the application (and the revised version agreed by the Project Officer) had already been bought.
- The Project Website has been updated and now contains more up to date information on the events and activities that have taken place. However, there are still some gaps in the information posted and photos need to be uploaded to the gallery.
- The Project Newsletters have been produced and are posted on the website and social media and sent to stakeholders and interested parties.